

INTIMATIONS

A. S. WATSON & CO.,
LIMITED.

WINE AND SPIRIT MERCHANTS.

ESTABLISHED A.D. 1841.

SCOTCH.

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French tessier to Yenan city, and a Lungchow-Nanning railway concession was one of which he had never before heard, and that his telegram of the 12th was based on information given by a newspaper correspondent. On the 17th May he again wired stating that the Yamen denied having granted any concession for a railway between Lungchow and Nanning. The next telegram is dated the 20th May, and in it Sir CLAUDE says he would like to have Lord SALISBURY's views on a possible French railway from Pakhoi to the interior of the province of Kwangsi, but such a concession might very likely be demanded by the French as compensation for the murder of a missionary, and that he himself thought that, in the event of its being constructed, it would not tend to harm our trade, but rather to increase it. To this Lord SALISBURY replied:—

"The more railways the better, from a commercial point of view; but differential rates against British trade are feared. If a concession is made to the French, the opportunity appears favourable for negotiating upon the opening of Nanning." The next in the series is Sir CLAUDE's written despatch of the 15th, which gives in fuller detail the information contained in the earlier of the telegrams given above, and reports his conversations with the Yamen. The Yamen said that the French argued that as China had given a pledge to Great Britain not to alienate any territory in the Yangtze region she should not refuse a similar pledge to France with regard to the southern and south-western provinces. Sir CLAUDE replied that the cases were totally different, that our object in asking for a pledge as regarded the Yamen was to safeguard the commerce on that river. He also warned them that the lease of a coaling station would inevitably be followed by similar demands from other Powers, including Great Britain, that we had so far refrained from asking even for an extension of territory at Kowloon, which was urgently required, for fear of giving a pretext to other Powers, but if China showed that only the Powers which showed no regard for her integrity obtained concessions, and that those which exhibited forbearance were left out in the cold, we should have to protect ourselves and demand our share. In a subsequent interview the Yamen endeavoured to obtain a promise that Great Britain would not make the lease of a coaling station to France a ground for further territorial demands on her own part. Sir CLAUDE again admonished the Yamen, and at a further interview told them that the instructions he had received did not authorise him to inflict any limits to the demands to which concessions to France might lead; he thought it possible that Her Majesty's Government in their extreme anxiety to preserve the integrity of China would refrain from making any territorial demands beyond such an extension of the Hongkong boundaries as was required for the defence of the colony; but whether they would be able to confine their demands within those limits depended on the nature of the concessions to France; apart from territorial acquisitions, the Chinese Government had had full warning, which he now repeated, as to the consequences of concessions of other kinds. Discussing the effect of the arrangement with France the Yamen said it in no way affected mining concessions to British subjects. Sir CLAUDE put to them a concrete case, referred to him by the Governor of Hongkong, of an English syndicate desirous of working certain coal mines in Kwangsi. The Ministers gave him the most explicit assurances that they were under no engagement to France which would in any way interfere with such a project. With regard to the non-alienation of the provinces mentioned the Yamen said they had no great objection to giving England the same pledge, but that France would ask for a similar pledge as regards the Yangtze.

Subsequent despatches report the granting to France of a concession for a railway from Pakhoi to Nanning, to which it appears that no objection was made on the part of England, except that the Yamen were warned that differential rates would not be tolerated. France, on the other hand, showed herself大方, for on the 26th July Sir CLAUDE MACDONALD had to telegraph as follows:— "MESSA JARDINE & CO. & CO.'s Syndicate have applied through Sunne, the Director-General of Railways, for the above Concession (Hongkong-Canton Railway Concession.) I am officially informed by the Chinese Government that the French Minister has warned them that French interests in Southern China will be injuredly affected if permission is granted to construct the said line to Canton. The Chinese Government entirely recognises the extreme weakness of such a contention." The Concession was subsequently approved and the survey is now in progress. With regard to the French railways, the position is summarised by Sir CLAUDE MACDONALD in a letter to Lord CHARLES BERESFORD, dated 23rd November last, in which he says:— "The French possess the right to construct three lines, but beyond acquiring the right they have done nothing. From Tonkin up the Red River Valley to Yunnanfu, say 200 miles. The impression in French railway circles is that a railway through Yunnanfu will not pay expenses, and if any serious attempt is made to carry out the extension of the Tonkin system, it will be merely as a stepping stone to Szechuan. Yet again any pretension that a railway from Yunnanfu to the Yangtze may have to rank as a commercial project has been pronounced against by every traveller in Central China."

"2.—Langchow-Lungchow-Nanning line, length about 100 miles. There appears to be an alternative open to the French of going to Pooi instead of Nanning. The right to build this line has been conceded, and a telegram when the concession for the Lungchow-Nanning line was made. Sir CLAUDE MACDONALD replied that he would make enquires, and the concession he had heard the Yamen mention was one for a railway from the

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CHINESE BANKING JOURNAL APRIL 27, 1890.

